News from Vindolanda: a casualty of a British revolt under Hadrian?

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The Roman fort at Vindolanda near Hadrian's Wall has yielded spectacular finds in recent years, above all a remarkable corpus of Roman letters preserved on inscribed wooden tablets. Excavation this year resumed just after Easter, in the area occupied by the Praetorium or Commandant's House. Here the Rev. Anthony Hedley had discovered some magnificent altars when he excavated in 1831. The original stones are now in Chester Museum. There are now splendid replicas, carved by Kerri Bowes, in the Open Air Museum in the gardens at Vindolanda. One hoped that more fine inscriptions might have been missed by Hedley. What was actually discovered was of lesser quality as a piece of carving, but historically of considerable interest. It is only the left-hand side of a tombstone, probably well under half the text, re-used in the heated hall constructed in the 4th-century Praetorium. Over a dozen similarly dressed sandstone blocks and several fluted column bases, also re-used in this building, were all taken from the same fairly elaborate Mausoleum, no doubt from the cemetery along the Stanegate, west of the fort.

The nine lines begin with the formula *D [M], Dis Manibus*, 'To the spirits of the dead', which came into fashion in the first century A.D., at first written out in full, by the end of the century abbreviated *DM*. The dead man was a centurion and had served in a unit of Tungrians, clearly the 1st Cohort, now well attested at Vindolanda, in the late Flavian period, and again under Trajan and Hadrian (it was later in Scotland and from the third century on at Housesteads). He was called T(itus) Ann[ ], presumably Ann[ius], among other names. Line 2 no doubt gave his filiation, tribe, *cognomen* and *origo* as well. In that case the missing part of the stone must have been a good deal bigger than the part that was found, and this suggests one should restore the name of a legion and the title *praepositus*, i.e. acting commander.

The word for his length of service, *[stipen]diorum*, was not abbreviated, and, as the other five instances among the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* where the word is written out in full are all very early, the inscription should probably be dated at the earliest possible point that is compatible with the evidence for comparative lateness provided by the abbreviated *DM*. Early in Hadrian's reign, the only time in the general period when a war is attested, looks appropriate – the rebellion in train when Hadrian succeeded in August 117 ('the Britons could not be kept under Roman control': Augustan History, *Hadrian*, 5), which lasted for several years, caused great casualties ('when your grandfather Hadrian was emperor what numbers of troops were killed by the Jews, what numbers by the Britons!': Fronto, *On the Parthian War*, 2) and ultimately led to his coming to Britain and building the wall.

This inscription supplies a good reason why the cohors I Tungrorum, which had already become a double-strength unit, a *cohors milliaria* ('of a 1000'), by A.D. 103 and was so described again under Antoninus Pius and later, was listed as a *cohors quingenaria* ('of 500') in inscriptions of A.D. 122 and 124 – it had doubtless lost several hundred men, along with its acting commander.

Omnibus *is very grateful to Professor Anthony Birley for giving us this first report on this new discovery. A fuller account will appear in the journal* Britannia *for 1998. Professor Birley's study of* Hadrian *has been published recently.*